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WESTERN HEMISPHERIC AFFAIRS DIPL POSTS

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 OTTAWA 000172

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TAGS: PREL EAID MOPS HA CA

SUBJECT: TFHA01: CANADIAN PM IN HAITI

REF: OTTAWA 158; OTTAWA 86

¶1. (SBU) Summary: During a two day visit to Haiti, Canadian Prime Minister Harper pledged C\$12 million (US\$11.4 million) to construct temporary buildings as a base for key Haitian government departments and underscored that Haiti would remain a long-term Canadian aid priority despite future budgetary restraint. Individual Canadians have already donated over C\$145 million (\$138.3 million) for earthquake relief, of which at least C\$124 million (\$118.3 million) will be eligible for matching federal funds. The trip is the first by a G20 leader since the earthquake and Harper's second to the country since becoming prime minister in ¶2006. The visit also highlights his personal role in directing the Canadian government's proactive response to the Haiti disaster (reflets), not incidentally reinforcing his already high poll numbers for competence and leadership among political leaders. End summary.

CANADIAN ASSISTANCE FOR THE LONG AS WELL AS SHORT TERM

¶2. (U) Prime Minister Stephen Harper arrived in Port-au-Prince on the afternoon of February 15 to get a first-hand look at earthquake damage and to assess the contribution of Canadian Forces (CF) personnel to disaster relief. In the capital, he met with Haitian President Rene Preval and Prime Minister Max Bellerive. In response to a formal request from Bellerive, PM Harper pledged C\$12 million to erect tents and construct hard-shell temporary buildings to provide a base for key Haitian government departments for at least one year. Construction will begin when the Haitian government confirms a location. PM Harper called the buildings "an important step toward recovery and reconstruction." The Boeing C-17 cargo plane on which the PM traveled also carried relief supplies, including water filters, medical supplies, and equipment.

¶3. (U) The C\$12 million commitment will apparently come from a C\$555 million five year disbursement (2006-2011) that Canada had previously earmarked for Haitian development and reconstruction. In addition, PM Harper pledged that "Canada will continue to support the Haitian government as it moves forward with its reconstruction and development agenda." He underscored that Canada's commitment will remain firm "even with the tighter fiscal situation we have in the years to come" and that "Haiti will be a priority." He added that "we don't intend to leave this time until the job is done."

¶4. (U) On February 16, PM Harper travelled by helicopter to Jacmel (the birthplace of Canadian Governor General Michaëlle Jean) to inspect CF facilities, including a water purification project. He continued to Leogane -- a major hub of Canadian relief activity -- where he visited a CF field hospital. The trip to Haiti was the first by a G20 leader since the earthquake and Harper's second as Canadian prime minister. He previously visited Haiti in August 2007 as part of a Latin American tour.

C\$145 MILLION IN INDIVIDUAL DONATIONS

¶5. (U) The Canadian government has pledged C\$85 million (\$81.1 million) in emergency aid to Haiti and will match eligible charitable donations of individual Canadians for earthquake relief

and reconstruction between January 12 and February 12. As of February 11, Canadians had contributed C\$145 million to 14 charities reporting donations to the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), of which at least C\$124 million should be eligible for federal matching funds under the Haiti Earthquake Relief Fund. The final figure is likely to be higher (probably around C\$130 million), as charities have until February 26 to forward all donations made by the February 12 deadline to CIDA. To be eligible for matching funds, donations had to be:

- made between January 12 and February 12, 2010;
- monetary (up to C\$100,000) (\$95,400);
- from an individual Canadian (or from a fundraising event raising money from individuals); and,
- to a registered charity receiving donations for Haiti earthquake relief.

Donations from corporations, provincial and local governments, businesses, partnerships, schools, incorporated or non-incorporated entities, and unions are not eligible for matching funds.

CONSULAR ASSISTANCE

¶6. (U) According to the Department of Foreign Affairs and

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International Trade (DFAIT), as of February 15 at 16:00 EST:

- 1,921 Canadians in Haiti had been located;
- 31 confirmed Canadian deaths;
- 55 Canadians remain unaccounted for; and,
- 4,328 people evacuated on 46 flights.

As of February 12, Canada's Joint Task Force Haiti was fully deployed with 2,046 soldiers, sailors, and air force personnel.

PM DEMONSTRATES LEADERSHIP, COMPETENCE

¶7. (U) As PM Harper has now entered his fifth year as Prime Minister, a new Nanos poll confirmed his comfortable lead over other federal party leaders in leadership qualities, despite a slide in December and January in his personal approval rating and in overall support for the Conservative Party. PM Harper remained respondents' clear choice as best prime minister (32% versus 16% for Liberal leader Michael Ignatieff) and scored well ahead of the other leaders on trust, competence, and vision. His leadership index ranking of 85.4 was more than twice that of Ignatieff (at 40.3), and also ahead of New Democratic Party (NDP) leader Jack Layton (at 52.2). Ignatieff scored third behind Harper and Layton on trust, competence, and vision. A February 4 Nanos poll had nonetheless suggested support nationally among committed voters remained tied at the Conservatives' 35.6%, the Liberals' 33.9%, and the NDP's 16.4%.

¶8. (U) Minimize concerned.

JACOBSON